

A METHOD FOR SELECTING AN OPERATING MODE FOR A FRAME-BASED
COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method for selecting an operating mode for a frame-based communications network consisting of a plurality of stations attached to a transmission medium. The plurality of stations include both a first type station and a second type station. The first type station is capable of transmitting and receiving first protocol frames in accordance with a first protocol. The second type station is capable of transmitting and receiving both first protocol frames and second protocol frames in accordance with a second protocol. The first protocol and the second protocol each use different signals on the transmission medium. The first type station is not capable of reliably detecting second protocol frames. The first protocol has a first protocol frame format containing at least two reserved bits in a first protocol frame header which are ignored in received frames by first type stations and always sent with a same fixed value by first type stations. The first protocol frame format is redefined to provide an updated first protocol frame header wherein two reserved bits in the first protocol frame header are allocated as a mode selection indicator field in the updated first protocol frame header. The mode selection indicator field has meaning for second type stations.

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